

Peace Corps Volunteers Write About *Songkran*

With Related Internet Links

Volunteer: Rex Dufour	Country of Service: Thailand	Years of Service: 1985–1987
Place and location: I was a Volunteer in Nakorn Ratchasima (also known as Korat). I lived about five km outside of Korat in Development Village.		

The Thai New Year, known as *Songkran*, on April 13, was always a big celebration. Depending on the locality in Thailand, it may be celebrated for 1 to 5 days. A lot of folks from Bangkok head up to Chiang Mai, in northern Thailand, to celebrate *Songkran*. *Songkran* occurs during the hottest part of the year and some have called it a national water fight. A lot of the celebration involves pouring (or splashing) water on anyone and everyone you meet. There's also quite a bit of baby powder smeared on people's faces—I'm not sure where that tradition came from. The more polite (*rip-roy*) way of doing *Songkran* is to ask the pardon of someone prior to gently pouring a small amount of water on his or her shoulder. I've only seen this done at official ceremonies, however. Most of the celebration is much more rowdy. In the northeast (Esan) of Thailand, the villagers, I'm told, used to place a cat in a cage and splash it with water. This was done in order to attract the monsoon rains (perhaps attracted to the cat's yowling?). I never personally saw this activity, but I did participate in many *Songkrans*. One year I invited several other Volunteers to Korat for *Songkran*. We borrowed a pickup truck and a 50-gallon drum along with some very large blocks of ice and drove around Korat cooling people off. There's nothing quite like being splashed with ice water on a 100-degree Fahrenheit day. It was great fun for both splashers and splashees and we *farong* (foreigners) attracted our share of water and powder, and even some tapioca.

Related URL:

The *Songkran* Festival: http://sunsite.au.ac.th/thailand/special_event/songkran/index.html

Volunteer: Leslie Wilson	Country of Service: Thailand	Years of Service: 1990–1992
Place and location: I was a Volunteer in Pathiu (village), Chumphon (province). It was an 8-hour train ride south of Bangkok.		

One celebration in Thailand was *Songkran*, the traditional Thai water festival that occurs in the middle of April each year. It's a bit like Thanksgiving/Christmas/New Year all rolled into one big, big holiday. You will, I hope, get lots of details about the history and practice of the holiday which, among other things, involved the "blessing" of others with water. Or, at least that's how it started out in ancient times—water poured respectfully and delicately over the wrists of those you wanted to honor. Now teenagers cruise around with 50-gallon drums of water loaded in the back of pickup trucks and drench passersby with buckets of water. Or, they just hook up a rubber hose to the household faucet and spray people who walk past their houses. All in good fun, of course, but a bit more than the tradition called for, I'm sure.

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